

PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT MATTERS

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THE TRICKLE DOWN EFFECT OF PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT

You're in your own agency, minding your own business. You have your own performance measures and know that other agencies have theirs. But did you ever stop to think that perhaps there might be some connection to what you do in your agency with other County performance?

A recent development highlighted this phenomenon. Two years ago, Fairfax County joined the International City/County Management Association's (ICMA) Center for Performance Measurement (CPM) in which we compare County performance in 14 areas with that of over 120 other jurisdictions across the country. As part of this effort, ICMA identifies top performers for various activities and then conducts in-depth interviews to determine what practices contribute to that high level of performance. This information is then published in an annual document entitled "What Works" and is distributed to all CPM members for their use.

In Fairfax County's first year of participation in the program, Risk Management was singled out for low general liability expenditures of \$0.98 per capita. For all jurisdictions reporting, the mean and median were \$4.67 and \$3.28.

There are two key areas in particular where Fairfax County focuses on training and risk mitigation to limit its potential liability: sewer/stormwater issues and employee training. Approximately 70 percent of the County's liability claim expenditures each year are in

sewer and stormwater backups. This is due in part to the rather low-lying topography of the County and the ease with which heavy rains can swell creeks and flood homes.

Knowing the potential exposure in this area, the County does all it can to see that the costs are minimized. As soon as a backup occurs, Public Works sends out a clean-up team. Their duties include eliminating the backup, taking inventory of any property damage, and disposing of any furnishings or personal property that have been destroyed (e.g., flood-damaged carpeting). Public Works staff also provide each affected homeowner a packet of information which includes contact names and phone numbers for Risk Management, the claims administrator, and the Health Department, as well as information on health testing that can be done on the property free of charge.

This swift action and cooperative attitude helps send the message that the County cares about helping homeowners get things back to normal as soon as possible. After the clean-up has been completed, Risk Management gets involved. The first action they take is actually a non-action – they do not declare sovereign immunity and deny the claim outright. Instead, staff and the third-party claims administrator assess each situation on its merits to determine if the County was at fault and respond accordingly.

After each incident, Public

Works and Health Department staff perform an assessment of the causes and work to prevent a recurrence. The suspect sewer lines are inspected, along with others Countywide that are part of the department's scheduled video inspection program. If cracks or intruding roots are found, they can be added to the County's priority list for repairs.

As part of its performance measurement efforts, the sewer division also tracks the number of back-ups each year and includes in their budget each year a report on whether they were able to stay under their target threshold of 15 fewer backups/overflows per 1,000 miles of sewer line.

Another potential factor in liability claims is employee behavior. Just as the County realizes that Public Works staff's helpful attitude contributes to a lessened degree of animosity on the part of citizens, so too does the County emphasize customer service and safety training for all of its public service employees.

The Risk Management staff focuses on "train the trainer" sessions, with safety officers in the larger departments in turn providing training to their own crews. Risk management training is currently made available to all employees (particularly those in larger departments such as Public Works, Police, Fire and Rescue, and Sheriff) on a range of topics, including safety, insurance, and claims handling.

The Fire and Rescue Department has a class entitled "Character Matters," in which they impress upon new recruits the importance of personal and professional integrity as well as valuing citizens as customers. The department's Internal Affairs Officer plays a critical role in this training to emphasize how important their behavior is and what the consequences can be from unprofessional actions. Later,

as firefighters/EMTs go through the ranks, they receive continuing training on customer satisfaction and treating citizens respectfully.

The Police Department also provides this type of training throughout officers' careers. They start off with a very comprehensive training program for new recruits, providing 200 hours more than the State requires for basic certification of law enforcement personnel. This entails cultural and ethnic diversity training in conjunction with crisis intervention skills. The department uses a very strong community policing model for dealing with community issues/conflicts. While the State requires 20 hours per year of in-service training, Fairfax County's officers averaged more than 72 hours per year (in 2001). They also attribute their high level of professionalism and low level of claims to strong leadership that sets high standards and expects officers to meet them.

The more difficult claims to predict each year include those that are weather-related, such as from trees downed by high winds or ice storms. Although some claims like this will always arise, the County works to eliminate potential hazards through more than 400 on-site safety inspections or audits per year, conducted by the Risk Management Division's safety manager and safety analyst.

These diverse activities contribute to the County's low general liability expenditures. At first glance, most agencies other than Risk Management, would not think that what they do connects to this performance. But it may, in ways that might surprise you.

Performance Measurement Matters is published quarterly by the PM Team. Editor: Barbara Emerson; Technical Support: Frann Shurnitski, Department of Management and Budget.

PM TEAM MEMBERS

The PM Team recently held its annual call for new members. Since only a couple of existing members cycled off, five new members will be joining the team. It is interesting to note that there are now 16 members from 14 different agencies. Feel free to contact any of the following if you have a question or comment about the County's performance measurement efforts.

Name	Agency	Telephone	E-Mail
Barbara Emerson, Coordinator	Department of Management and Budget	324-3009	BEMERS
Karrie Beckmann	Department of Human Resources	324-3394	KBECKM
Sheila Bishop	Department of Vehicle Services	324-3541	SBISHO
Evan Braff	Department of Community and Recreation Services	324-5650	EBRAFF
Evy Duff	Health Department.....	246-2947	EDUFFO
Dick Eckert	Fairfax-Falls Church Community Services Board	934-8737	RECKER
Anne Fu	Department of Public Works and Environmental Services/ Business Planning and Support	324-1832	LFU000
Liz Henry	Department of Family Services	324-7889	MHENR1
Mila Jao	Department of Finance	324-3150	MJAO00
Stephen Knippler	Department of Housing and Community Development	246-5161	SKNIPP
John Maberry	Department of Public Works and Environmental Services/ Refuse Collection and Recycling	324-5222	JMABER
Doug Miller	Fairfax County Public Library	324-8322	DMILL4
Eric Mills	Police Department	246-4299	EMILLS
Allison Owen	Department of Management and Budget	324-2044	AOWEN1
Cathy Spage	Department of Information Technology	324-3870	CSPAGE
Bill Yake	Department of Management and Budget	324-2030	WYAKE0

Linking Strategic Plans to Performance Measures

Quite a few County agencies have strategic plans. However, how many of these are linked the agency's performance measures in order to determine if those strategic objectives are being met?

County Executive Tony Griffin recently began an initiative to ensure that all agencies develop and use strategic plans that are tied to the overall County vision. A working group comprised of various agency directors and other County staff has begun discussions of what this should look like. The need to demonstrate accountability for achieving strategic goals has come up many times in these discussions and is considered to be a key aspect of developing a meaningful agency strategic plan that can be used to deliver cost-effective services in the High Performance Organization model (quality, customer satisfaction, and financial performance).

In studying similar cases where local governments tied strategic plans to performance measures, a key concept was the need to identify and track those things most critical to achieving strategic objectives. Sometimes we substitute quantity for quality and report data for a great many performance indicators when a few, carefully chosen measures would be better. Easier said than done, right? However, if you ask yourself the question, "What is the worst thing that will happen if this program ceases to exist?" you should find it easier to identify what your key outcomes are, which should in turn link to your strategic objectives.

The challenges faced this past fiscal year and during the adoption of the FY 2003 budget are not likely to abate. If anything, we face more and greater challenges in the future. By having a clear picture of our strategic priorities and

associated measures of success, with a roadmap for achieving them, we will be in a better position to justify resources and demonstrate accountability to the citizens of Fairfax County.



"If we have performance measurement without strategic planning, we know how fast we are going, but we do not know whether we are going in the right direction."

If we have strategic planning without performance measurement, we know we are going in the right direction, but we do not know whether we are getting there."

AUGUST BROWNBAG

Just in time for preparation of performance measures for the FY 2004 budget, the Performance Measurement (PM) Team will offer the next quarterly brownbag lunch on Thursday, August 1, 2002 from noon until 1:00 p.m. in Room 120C of the Government Center. The topic will be a refresher on Fairfax County's methodology and terminology as well as a brief introduction to the new web-based PM database anticipated to be available later this summer.

Bring your lunch and take advantage of this just-in-time training to learn the County's PM system. No RSVP is necessary; just show up.



Visit the PM Website:

<http://infoweb/DMB/pfmeasure.htm>

